How to Manage Stress?

3. Improve work habits

- **Prioritize your work**: Based on importance and urgency, prioritize your homework and other tasks.

- **Break down tasks**: Break large tasks down into smaller and more manageable pieces to avoid getting overwhelmed.

4. Build your support network

- **Open up to those that you trust**: Sharing of thoughts and feelings can help regulate emotions

- **Learn to accept help**: Accepting help can create opportunities for problem solving and build authentic relationships.

5. Keep a healthy lifestyle

- **Fight stress with healthy lifestyle**: Develop positive thinking, practice relaxation techniques, stay physically active, eat a healthy diet and get enough sleep

What is stress?

When we encounter changes, difficulties or challenges in life, such as resuming normal class after long period of school suspension due to pandemic, sitting for exams, participating in competitions, etc., we may feel stressed. Apart from these external factors, internal factors like self-expectations, our attitude in facing problems as well as our ability to relax also play a role in determining the level of stress we experience. An adequate amount of stress can motivate us to perform better and increase our work efficiency. However, when the stress level becomes too high or when we are under prolonged stress, our physical and mental health would be negatively affected. Therefore, we need to learn stress management skills to keep our stress at an appropriate level.
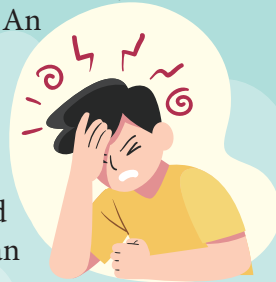
Signs of overstressed

Physical signs

- Muscle tension and pain, headache, back pain, fast heart rate, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal discomfort, insomnia or hypersomnia, fatigue

Emotional signs

- Mood swings, anxious, irritable, anger, low mood

Cognitive signs

- Difficulty to concentrate, memory problem

Behavioral signs

- Undereating or overeating, restlessness, lack of motivation, social withdrawal, increased smoking and drinking, substance abuse, self-harm

Effective Stress Management

1. Identify the causes and triggers of stress, take appropriate actions to solve the problems

Example: You may feel stressed for saying no to your friends

Your thoughts: I have to say yes to my friends in order not to be disliked

Your feeling: Stressed

Take actions: Find evidence that supports your thought and evidence that doesn't support the thought

- Evidence that supports the thought: I said yes to my friend and she was happy with me

- Evidence that doesn't support the thought: I refused to go out with my friends at night and we are still best friends

Problem-solving: Modify the unhelpful thought to realistic thought, i.e., even though I say no to my friends, we can stay friends. Stop prioritizing others to minimize rejection

2. Develop reasonable self-expectations

- **Be reasonable:** We don't need to be perfect in everything

- **Do not be over-responsible:** Avoid taking up too many responsibilities that you can't manage